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"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

THE SOUL-GATHERER.

THE ENEMY.

[CONCLUDED.]

Luther's parable represents Satan the prince holding a conference of the lost spirits who do his work in the world. "I met a gallant ship carrying treasure on the deep," said one of these emissaries; "I raised the winds, and the waters heaved. The ship fought well with the waves, but at length I succeeded and she sank." "Well done," said the prince of the power of the air. "I met a caravan crossing the desert, furnished with precious things, and many men. I brought the wind of the wilderness, and the thunders rolled, and the lightning flashed. Every life was destroyed, and none remains to tell it; the sands of the desert rose and buried them." "Well done," said the enemy of man, "yet you only sent them the sooner home." But while the recital went on of all the evil hell can work on earth, a spirit came with haste and malice, saying, "I met a young Christian full of love and hope, and his foot seemed as unwearied as my own. I sent persecution on him, but it daunted him not. I tried flattery and the smile of the world. I left him not by night or day. He began to weary, he ceased to work, I watched him on till sleep overcame him, the sleep of the soul, and now he's fast asleep." And at the news, and vaults of the dark region rang again with shouts of triumph.

Christian, it is his chiefest effort in this world to set us to sleep. He has opiates for each disposition, inducements to offer to us all. How speciously and eloquently he pleads with the poor heart to indulge its darling sin? Is it not a little one? Is it not a good disposition carried a little too far? If he can induce sleep, it is all he asks. With noiseless step, unseen, unheard, disbelieved in, he secures his prey. When we are awake and sober, and watching, there is not so much to fear. He may tempt us to act rashly or inconsistently, but that will bring us to tears and bitterness of heart. It will lead us to Christ anew. Satan may blow on our pride and miserable self-will. But the flame he raises will itself punish us. We shall fall, but to rise again. He may bring unjust reproach on us; or reproach which is partly just and partly unjust. The reproaches of them that reproach Jesus rise not so high as His heaven, and must needs fall on the poor worms that are creeping out their little course through the blast, trusting in His name. False reproach will fall harmless as the snowflake, and, like it, melt away. Jesus will come to wipe off with His own hand. And wherein we deserve it, He will chasten us for giving a handle to the enemy. With heart searching we shall return to Him who sets us free. But sleep, sleep, sleep will undo us. It will hurt all round us. A crust of carelessness is forming on our souls continually, except when the Holy Spirit is working in us to break it through. It is possible to speak the words of God in a way that puts a tacit negative on all we say. Satan's captives are all in earnest about something. If you tell them in a dry formal way that the house is on fire, they will judge it at once to be a fiction. You profess to follow One who gave blood for your ransom, and you live down the testimony by a careless, easy life, more self-indulgent than their own. You play into Satan's hands. You give him all he asks. Let us not yield to him now when the ages of his power are so nearly run out. Let us reject his bribes. He is doomed, sentenced, ready to be chained, and is madly bent on working all his will on earth, till he has to bend his proud neck to the chain that hangs ready in the angel's hand.

Glorious will it be to gather in the harvest through millennial years, to count in the willing thousands as, allured by love, they pass along to crown our Jesus Lord of all! For the hinderer shall hinder no more. But may it not even be a higher honour to follow the Lamb in days of conflict and shame? Without the hope of the rest on high, our hearts would many a time lie down weary and faint. And yet if we were amid its glories, and

gazing on the Lamb, might we not covet one errand from Him into the lost world, that for once we might speak the wondrous truth aright in sinners' ears. Spirit of power, so enlighten us to think and pray, to work and win, as if we had once been across the threshold, and looked into heaven, and—into hell!

Even if the devil's power be wholly confined to this earth, see what he has done! Faber thought he discovered from Scripture that this earth was, of old, the principality of Satan. Whether this be true or no, his arm was strong enough to wrest it away from allegiance to the mighty God. He broke into the sanctuary of our Eden. He built the Babel tower. He led men on to make earth so vile that a flood must cleanse it. He blasted Sodom and Gomorrah with crime. He set up the golden calf in the face of Sinai. He drew the plan for the betrayal of the Lord before the eye of the covetous disciple. Fast as the Christian Church was reared, he raised within her his own lying antichrist. He lighted every pile of martyrdom.

Has Satan not all but ruined ourselves? Did he not this very morning nearly persuade us to leave off working for Jesus? How can we wonder at his power over his captives when he is so often on the verge of destroying us, the free? Do you not hear his accusing voice? Who but he would drive into our soul from his vile quiver an arrow, and then put forth a white angel hand to lift it, saying, "This dart was found in Thy child's heart. Entertainest Thou such children in Thy house, Keeper of Israel?" Who but he would whisper to us that our God is a dishonest Promiser, and then torture us with the sin of the doubt? Satan cannot endure to see a pardoned sinner gazing up into the Eye of Love that lights the throne. For he, outcast, has no way back to the presence chamber. He is bent on breaking up our peace with God. He knows, if he succeeds, that he will change our garden of delights into a treadmill of heartless duty. And yet, have we not continually yielded basely to him, and believed him rather than the Spirit of truth?

Till the god of this world shall, by the strongest hand in the universe, be withdrawn from the conflict, the mysterious thwarting of the gospel invitation shall go on. Till then shall the tavern open for the half-cured drunkard, who would fain muster strength of resolution to pass the door. Till then, the impure bait shall be laid out for those who fain would walk in the strength of a beloved mother's precept. Till then, the novel shall lie ready for the night hour of her who means to read her Bible afterwards. Till then, the remains of past ages shall be dug up to bewilder the mind of the philosopher, instead of leading it up to the Alpha who will so shortly read to us, with His own voice, all the mysteries of His fair handiwork: But NO LONGER.

SPEAKING THROUGH TEARS.

Old Mr. Malcom was a stern, serious man. Almost from the beginning, life had gone roughly with him. The young human plant had not grown up in a hot house, carefully sheltered and tenderly nurtured; but out on a bleak hillside, where the rough wind compacted every fibre of its nature, and twisted it into unhandsome shapes; where the hot suns dried up its moisture and stunted its growth. But the roots struck down deeply and took firm hold. There was strength, and toughness, and tenacity; though neither beauty nor grace.

With no heart to love him, and no hand to guide him into safe paths. Mr. Malcom went astray in the days of early manhood. He went very far astray, debasing and degrading himself. A rough, hard, strong-willed young man, he brooked no remonstrances or reproaches; and if force of any kind were brought against him, he fought his way through with a fierce strength that made him a dangerous antagonist.

A new circuit preacher came into the neighborhood where he lived when he was about twenty-five years of age, and held meetings in the school-house—a man of more than usual earnestness, who had great power in speaking. Considerable interest in spirit-

ual things was awakened. Malcom heard him talked about, and, as was usual with him when religion or a minister was the theme, answered scoffingly. Some of his acquaintances tried to get him to the school-house on Sunday to hear the new preacher; but he preferred the tippling shop and vicious companions.

One day, while the preacher still lingered in this part of the circuit, Malcom met him in the road. They were alone. The preacher had heard of Malcom, and Malcom had heard of the preacher—both men being noted in their way. The preacher stopped, with his mild, calm eyes fixed on Malcom's face, Malcom scowled and moved on.

"My brother," said the preacher, kindly, and held out his hand.

"Don't brother me, you sanctimonious old hypocrite!" exclaimed Malcom, facing round and confronting the preacher. He looked fierce and threatening.

"We are children of one Father," answered the preacher, in a calm voice, still holding out his hand.

In his blind passion, Malcom struck the preacher's hand, accompanying the act of violence with an oath of such deep profanity that the preacher shuddered and turned pale. He was a true servant of His Divine Master—who, while on earth, went about doing good. The blow did not hurt him half so much as the evidence it gave of the man's fearful depravity. He did not feel it as aimed at himself, but at the Lord, whose minister he was.

The preacher stood still, with his penetrating eye resting on the man. A tender sorrow veiled his face.

"You have hurt me here, my friend," he said, gently, but not weakly or timidly, laying his hand against his breast. "My hand does not feel the blow; but my heart is aching. I am only solicitous for your good."

The preacher's eyes were dim—he was speaking through tears. When a man thus speaks, his words have power. Malcom's whole aspect changed.

"My brother!" said the preacher, again extending his hand. Malcom hesitatingly accepted it. "My brother," added the preacher, still speaking through tears, "why should we stand apart? What is it that comes between us?—evil or good?"

"Evil, and not good," replied Malcom, in a voice so changed that it sounded new in his own ears.

"Put it away," said the preacher. "You are a strong man, and God wants you. He is calling you now through His servant. He has work for you to do; and all who do His work have a precious reward."

The two men sat down by the roadside, and talked long together; then, going into the woods, where human eyes might not see them, they knelt, and the preacher besought God's mercy and forgiveness for his long-erring but now repentant son.

From that time Malcom's feet walked in another way. He left the paths of vice and sin, and became an active member of the church. The change was remarkable. In a single hour his whole external life took a new form. The tippler was no longer seen in dram shops; the scoffer at religion turned his steps to the house of prayer; the man of violence placed bit and curb on his cruel passions. In all matters of religion he was zealous. Strong-willed and persistent of character, he naturally became a leader among his brethren. There was no softness about him. His natural temperament remained. The forms of life, twisted, compacted, stunted in growth by the rough storms and hot suns of his early winters and summers were not changed; but new purposes impelled him in a new direction. He was a better man and a better citizen. He was working to higher ends; but he found it easier to work on the material outside than inside of himself. As he saw, he walked, and walked in the narrow way leading to life eternal.

In a year he married an excellent young woman, also a member of the church. He established himself in business, and, through industry and attention thereto, prospered. At the age of thirty he was a class-leader. Having the gift of language, united with much fervor of spirit, he was acceptable in this position. His class was always full; and the

members thereof often spoke of the "precious season" they had together.

So the years went on. Mr. Malcom had children; human souls whose lives coming through his life took therefrom hereditary inclinations and a form of life answering to his own. In a degree they inherited his perverse impulses. They were not what we call good children—gentle, obedient, loving; but active, self-willed, and prone to step aside into forbidden ways. They constantly disturbed, the strong, quick nature of the father, not yet wholly subdued, so making him blind and impatient. The oldest son was an especial trial to his father. He resembled him strongly, both as to personal appearance and disposition.

Mr. Malcom was not skilled in the law of love; and, therefore, his government with his children was based on the law of force. He tried to bend the cold iron by main strength, at the risk of snapping its tough, resisting fibres, instead of softening it by the heat of love, and then fashioning its impressible substance with gentler touches. What followed? If the iron did not break, it got ugly twists, or bent too far, taking always unhandsome shapes with every effort of his blind strength.

So the contest went on between him and his oldest boy, John, from childhood to early manhood—between the cold, resisting iron and the strong hand.

"I will break his will if I break his heart!" Over and over again did Mr. Malcom come up to the fruitless work of reducing his son to obedience with this stern sentence on his lips. Punishment had been repeated so often, and with such increasing severity, that it had become cruelty. And yet there was no good result.

As John approached manhood, under this stern discipline, there began to appear signs of resistance. Mr. Malcom was startled and distressed. A painful sense of anxiety held back the angry impulses that struggled in his heart. A depressing weakness came over him. He had often prayed for his son; but never in the broken voice that now marked his petitions. If he had prayed for himself it would have been better—for a softer heart towards his child—for a spirit of tenderness and forgiveness—for love in the place of anger. The hindrances were with himself. He must overcome the hardness of his son. But he did not see this.

John's twenty-first birthday came. For this day the boy had long looked with restless impatience that had its groundwork in a sense of filial duty. While under age he owed submission; and however hard it was to yield under his father's cold and exacting discipline, he felt himself bound to the general law of obedience. But now he stood, in thought, absolved from the requirement of this law. He was a man and answerable only to himself. So he thought, and he was in earnest. He had been long enough wrenched and beaten upon. That kind of discipline must cease.

There was a race-course in the neighborhood, and a purse was to be run for on John's birthday. Races were held there three or four times in a year, and John was often present on these occasions, though at the risk of punishment if the fact became known to his father, whose interdiction was positive. It was his intention to go on this day openly; to go as a man who had a right to determine his own actions. If it made issue with his father, his father would have to give way. Parental domination was at an end.

Mr. Malcom had left the breakfast-table, and was passing through the door, when he heard his wife say, in a tone of surprised remonstrance—

"O, no, no, John!"

"Yes, mother, I am going!" was answered.

"Going where?" asked Mr. Malcom, turning back.

No one answered. He looked at his wife and he looked at John. Her face was troubled, his resolved.

"Where are you going, sir?" demanded the father, his brows gathering, sternly.

"To the races," said the young man calmly.

"What!" The frown deepened. The voice was a quick throb of anger.

"I am going to the races."

"No, you are not! I lay my commands on you!"